The Problem of the Importance of Science in Azerbaijani Democratic Thought at the Beginning of the 20th Century (1900-1920)

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Abstract

At the beginning of the 20th century, the confrontation between science and religion became increasingly acute. In this regard, a discussion on the topic of "What sciences do we need?" unfolded on the pages of the newspaper "Hayat" ("Life"). The main topic was formed as follows: which sciences, religious or secular, should be considered the most important. This question was raised back in the 70s of the 18th century in the newspaper "Ekinci" ("Plowman"). But in those difficult times, "Ekinci" failed to develop a discussion on this burning issue, and the life of the newspaper itself was short-lived. At the beginning of the 20th century, discussions around the issue revived again, official discussions began after the publication of A. Akhundoglu's article in the 106th issue of the newspaper "Hayat" on May 17, 1906. A. Huseynzade, J. Mamedguluzade, O.F. Nemanzade and others took part in the polemics, and the materials were reflected in the article "What sciences do we need?", published in the Tiflis printing house "Geyrat" ("Honor") in 1907.

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According to the clergy, "only theology can make a person human" (1, 105). However, A. Huseynzade considered it necessary to study both secular and religious sciences. He emphasized that he was not one of those who denied religious sciences, but at the same time he was not of the same mind with those who did not recognize secular sciences. In this case, the autocracy fears the enlightenment of the Turks, and strives to ensure that the Turkic peoples remain ignorant of their history, roots, and do not understand the demands of the new era, the new life.

Representatives of democratic thought of that period took a decisive position on the issue of the necessity of sciences that guarantee the progressive development of society. Heated discussions periodically flared up in the press of that time. They did not lead to the development of a single opinion, but highlighted the existing realities. At all times, science became the main reason for human progress, turned into the main condition for the development of society. That is why democratic thought cannot be one-sided, hostile to the role of sciences in society, on the contrary, it is in search of truth, adheres to an objective position, relying on the existing reality. Here, a single thought could objectively be formed, but on many occasions, opinions differed, although in the end they converged in one direction. Some of the representatives of democratic thought did not consider the study of religious sciences from the Middle Ages to the present period important, assessed them as not corresponding to the pace of development of society, called these sciences the main culprits of ignorance, backwardness of the people. Many, in accordance with the innovative spirit of the era, put forward the need to study only secular sciences and substantiated their importance.

It is with great regret that we have to say that the priceless philosophical heritage of the glorious figures of Azerbaijani democratic thought has not been sufficiently studied, it has not yet

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become the subject of detailed study. Being in the monopoly of various ideologies, despite the lack of due assessment, there are no major research works to this day. Therefore, an objective attitude to this heritage is commendable and future generations will praise the researchers.

Prominent people of that era lived far from a carefree life, but at the same time they never forgot about the future of the people, the coming freedom of the homeland. Therefore, the memory of them is dear to every Azerbaijani. They dreamed of enlightenment, which should lead the nation to the broad road to a happy future. Democratic thinking individuals called on the people to master sciences. They openly said that the nation does not and cannot have another path. One of such individuals A. Huseynzade succinctly explained the important, irreplaceable role of religious and secular sciences in public life, their impact on the physical and spiritual health of a person. A major scientist and thinker in the dilemma "what sciences do we need?" pointed out: "The issues raised in the article are extremely important (2, 122)". In fact, even from the standpoint of today, it is impossible to reject any of the sciences, in social life they all have equal rights. That is, no science can belittle the importance of another, otherwise signs of idolatry are revealed. At the same time, it is absolutely unacceptable to oppose sciences, because in society this can lead to misfortunes and tragedies. In our opinion, the most correct approach is to recognize the vital importance of secular and religious sciences, a complete guarantee of their equivalence. At the same time, humanity will receive invaluable benefits from the mutual enrichment of sciences. In order to recognize realities, "to clearly present the truth, it is necessary to write a book of 300-400 pages" (2, 123).

Democratically thinking individuals, with a variety of opinions regarding the importance of sciences in public life, repeatedly emphasized the need for secular sciences. None of them noted the importance of religious sciences, theology, all approached them with denial, were supporters of their exclusion from public life.

The ignorant mullahs of that period, who mocked and scoffed at science, and most importantly, who did not understand it, could not oppose anything except their own dirty intentions. Thus, "they opened the way to legends, obscurantism, conflicts, turned the Sharia into an instrument of their hypocritical dreams, and since then Islam has collapsed" (3,146). The clergy spoke on behalf of Islam, but at the same time proceeded from their desires, interests, excessive ambitions, invented various pretexts, slander, tricks. Their actions were not based on law at all, did not correspond to Islamic values, and deeply contradicted the canons of the Holy Quran.

The leading intellectuals quite rightly noted that the clergy itself was mired in ignorance. They still enjoy trust, but they cannot fully protect themselves from the awakening people. The masses express mistrust of the clergy every time. Therefore, the mullahs, in turn, attempt to sow the seeds of doubt in the people. As indicated above, they continued their vile deeds in mosques as well. Leading figures compared them to European colonists and missionaries. Representatives of democratic thought acted as tireless defenders of the interests of the oppressed people. They never tired of repeating: “You, who distort true Islam, call yourselves Muslims and are false scholars dressed in Muslim clothes, are being spoiled by the false scholars’ far-from-true and reckless narratives invented under the guise of Sharia” (3.150). And this was at a time when the primary tasks of religious figures speaking in the name of Allah and the Holy Quran were to free the people from poverty and hardship. They were called upon to free people from need, because its main cause was the backwardness of national self-awareness, the nonsense and emptiness in the minds of those who ruled society. But not only did they not have the slightest idea about the Almighty and Islam, all their thoughts and actions seemed implausible and deceptive.

According to researchers, the clergy did not receive wages and satisfied their minimum living needs at the expense of the people. They had no other way to earn a living, the mullahs showed treachery and ingratitude to those at whose expense they ate and drank. Therefore, they

more than others hindered the awakening and formation of national self-consciousness. Instead of relying on the people and leading them into the future, due to their inherent insatiability and darkness, they erected new barriers. Moreover, such actions of gluttons did not lead to any responsibility.

During the Soviet period, it seemed that the approach to representatives of democratic thought was demonstrated from real positions, but in fact, on religious and national grounds, their way of life remained in the shadows. Creativity was falsified by "international" edits, and an even heavier burden was placed on them. Guided by a class approach, Soviet ideology divided them into progressive and reactionary fronts, seeking to remove any manifestation of the national-religious spirit from our consciousness and slogans. Soviet ideologists carefully concealed their goals, and they consisted of undermining the national spirit, eroding from consciousness the sense of pride inherent in the Turks. And all this was done out of fear of the people. National values inherent to us were crossed out, they were thrown into the dark corners of history, and instead, the fundamental principles of the people were "enriched with the seeds of internationalism." Relying on the ideology of internationalism, there was no room for religious faith and national perfection. Society became increasingly distant from its beliefs and national identity.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the activities of democratically thinking individuals were aimed at saving the people, whose hearts were bleeding from need and deprivation. They called on the people to be proud of their glorious past. The progressive intelligentsia wanted to clear the people's path to a bright future from all gloom, to free them from slavery, the invisible shackles of colonialism. In order for our people to remain in ignorance, the enemies united in a single impulse and acted together. Progressive individuals made serious efforts to lead their compatriots out of bondage. They wanted to see a different people, directed their thoughts to free themselves from colonial slavery, and strove to achieve their goal. To do this, it was imperative to cast aside ignorance.

The progressive intelligentsia considered the unification of the people around a single national idea to be a strategic task. Therefore, in the colonial empire, they turned into spokesmen and ardent supporters of national interests. At the dawn of the 20th century, democrats predicted major changes in the life of the country, promptly responded to all events, called on their compatriots to wake up from a centuries-old sleep, throw off the shackles of ignorance and slavery. Without any exaggeration, democratically thinking individuals were a bright mirror in the public life of Azerbaijan. They disapproved and were not afraid to demonstrate the ugly sides of society. Progressive people saw the changes and believed that the time would soon come when the people would free themselves from slavery and take a course for a wonderful future. Democrats rightly believed that ignorance of life's realities contradicted Islam, the Koran, and called on the people, whom they sacredly trusted, to comprehend sciences and strive for enlightenment. They conquered the people with their faith in freedom, prosperity, a bright future, and in their appeal to the masses they pointed out the only way to salvation from threats and tragedies. Because it was precisely ignorance and ignorance that left people in the vile clutches of colonialism. Representatives of democratic thought who contributed to progress and the awakening of the people invariably turned to Islamic morality, substantiated the importance and necessity of sciences in the historical destiny of Muslim Turks. They considered it their civic duty, sought to save the nation, to rescue it from a difficult situation. The progressive intelligentsia declared that science, knowledge, education and enlightenment would become the saviors of the "Islamic world". They viewed science as a bright torch illuminating the darkness of public life, allowing one to recognize enemies. Their main ideal was to convey to the people the benefits of sciences that could awaken the nation from slumber, to lead it to progress. That is why democratically thinking Azerbaijanis formulated the importance of

getting rid of slavery in order to implement their ideals: “All sciences are equally important to us: religious, medical, mathematical, abstract and material! Also important are the thoughts of the Prophet, non-religious sciences, literature, holistic knowledge, and on this path is Mr. Ali, a world-famous scientist!” (2,124).

The clergy hid their true intentions from the people living under the colonial regime. Not only did they not participate in the struggle for liberation from slavery, but they often acted in concert with the authorities. And the imperial government almost roared at the top of its voice: "You are all clergymen, and it is the duty of clergymen to always say: "We are the trunks of the same tree with the government" (8, p. II . 346). The clergy, along with the government, sucked the blood of defenseless Muslims. But at the same time, at wedding celebrations, memorial ceremonies, they sat at the head of the table, were the most respected people at events. In essence, the people supported them, brought them donations. Instead of repaying with kindness, the clergy showed no interest in the life of the people, did nothing to alleviate the situation and in every way mocked their compatriots. These bloodsuckers turn away from the people, tirelessly stand on the strong, opposing side's positions, and all this for the sake of ensuring a well-fed and comfortable life. Thus, the clergy did not justify the hopes of Muslims, lost trust. They, without any embarrassment or fear, live fat at the expense of Muslim "brothers" and leave this mortal world without any pangs of conscience.

By supporting the Muslim clergy, the colonial regime pursued a fundamental, hidden goal – to dissolve and destroy the Muslim Turks in the imperial cauldron. At that time, many nationalities lived within the vast empire. The Russian nationality held primacy, followed by the Muslim population. But other nationalities were inferior to the first two in terms of influence” (8, p. II , 284). The Russian colonizers sought to intimidate the Muslims, to dominate them, so that they “unquestioningly obeyed their masters” (8, p. II , 209).

An era was coming when the world was faced with upheavals, nations began to see the light and fight for their rights. Heroes, representatives of other nations, threw themselves into the flames of war against despotism. And at that time, the amazing sounded: "Hey, people, is there not a person among the Muslims who is ready to sacrifice himself for the people?" (8, p. II , 350). Therefore, democratically thinking individuals cared about the people, with fervor in their hearts they addressed the rulers: "Hey, Shiites, hey, unbelievers, Turkic Muslim brothers, seeing the people who have revived in spirit, do not allow the nation to remain hungry and naked" (3, 240).

Because the faith of the richest people remained at a very low level, the cold eyes of our "educated individuals" became accustomed to the darkness of modern life. The clergy, far from national ideals, committed treason "for the sake of their lives" and therefore compatriots with exhausted bodies and tired spirits were infected with an incurable disease. Time placed a heavy burden of responsibility for the people on the shoulders of patriotic democratic thinkers who loved their nation.

The ruling chauvinistic circles advocated the idea of state pan-Slavism, which implied the assimilation of peoples. They made the conversion of Muslim Turks into a disenfranchised mass on the territory of the empire, and their maintenance in slavery a priority of state policy. In this, the support of the state, the Muslim clergy, servilely served them. They became enemies on the path of the people ’s development, for they were very afraid of the awakening of their co-religionists. In the current situation, democratic thought defended its positions, the progressive intelligentsia became a role model, and finally, showed initiative and attempted to set the clergy in motion, despite their very limited opportunities. From their lips one could hear: “If you are a true servant of Allah, where are your instructions? Where is your service to Islam? Where is your spiritual support for the

people? Where is your help to the disadvantaged? Where is your work for the people?" (8, p. II , 313).

Tsarist Russia, having accumulated a great deal of colonial experience, launched an imperial policy and without much effort led to a split in the Muslim population, including the Muslim Turks. Thus, the empire opposed the development of science in Azerbaijan.

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